

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Gloria D. Steele
Acting Administrator
United States Agency of International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Administrator Steele:

We write regarding federal funding awarded by the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) to EcoHealth Alliance Inc. (EcoHealth), a New York-based non-profit organization with a history of collaborating with the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).

In 2013, EcoHealth was awarded a \$2.5 million grant through USAID to study disease emergence. According to a House Foreign Affairs Committee Minority Staff Report and a 2015 published research paper, EcoHealth funneled federal funding through this grant to researchers at the WIV.¹ This is deeply concerning given the WIV is a possible origin site of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lab has significant ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and military biological research.

It is also troubling that the 2015 project utilized Gain of Function (GOF) research to study coronaviruses in bats in China. In October 2014, the Obama Administration paused GOF research activities and funding, and the research team received a letter requesting a voluntary pause of its research yet chose not to do so.²³

According to government records, published research papers, and significant reporting, this is not the first time EcoHealth transferred taxpayer dollars to a CCP lab. As reported by the *Wall Street Journal*, EcoHealth has partnered with the WIV since 2004.⁴ Between 2015 and 2019, the WIV received approximately \$598,500 from EcoHealth for a National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases-funded study on the risk of bat coronavirus emergence. Additionally, numerous reports have signaled that EcoHealth funded research at the WIV through Department of Defense funding.⁵

As you know, the CCP runs the WIV. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the CCP replaced the former WIV head with China's top biowarfare expert, Major General Chen Wei. The WIV facility houses a Biosafety Level IV laboratory, which is the only maximum-security biosafety containment lab in China, and has a history of safety concerns even prior to the COVID-19

¹ <https://gop-foreignaffairs.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Final-Minority-Report-on-the-Origins-of-the-COVID-19-Global-Pandemic-Including-the-Roles-of-the-CCP-and-WHO-9.20.20-Coverpage.pdf>

² <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/10/17/doing-diligence-assess-risks-and-benefits-life-sciences-gain-function-research>

³ <https://www.sciencemag.org/sites/default/files/documents/43088final.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nih-presses-u-s-nonprofit-for-information-on-wuhan-virology-lab-11597829400>

⁵ <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/coronavirus-lab-escape-theory.html>

pandemic.⁶ For example, in 2018, two Department of State cables raised concerns regarding safety at the WIV, highlighting “a serious shortage of appropriately trained technicians and investigators needed to safely operate this high-containment laboratory.”⁷ In recent weeks, the Department of State confirmed that several researchers at the WIV became sick with COVID-19-like symptoms in the fall of 2019, and since 2017, the WIV has engaged in classified research with the Chinese military.⁸

Given the concerns surrounding the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. How much funding awarded to EcoHealth through USAID has been given to or used in collaboration with the WIV?
2. Was USAID aware that funding awarded to EcoHealth was used for GOF research and that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent a letter to this research team requesting a voluntary pause?
3. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, has USAID reconsidered, paused, or cancelled work with EcoHealth or the WIV?
4. Has any other USAID grant, contract, or subcontract been used to fund work at the WIV?

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Very respectfully,



Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



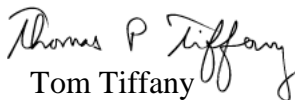
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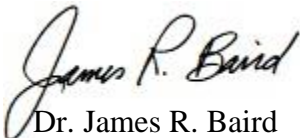
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⁶ <https://gop-foreignaffairs.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Final-Minority-Report-on-the-Origins-of-the-COVID-19-Global-Pandemic-Including-the-Roles-of-the-CCP-and-WHO-9.20.20-Coverpage.pdf>

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ <https://2017-2021.state.gov/fact-sheet-activity-at-the-wuhan-institute-of-virology/index.html>



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